

## Choosing photos can be emotional time for families

When Bauer's mother died Aug. 11, she left Naumann a call he returned from Las Vegas, where he was teaching a seminar.

"My heart just sunk because I thought there was no way he was going to be able to do this for me," Bauer said. "The funeral was on Monday at 4 o'clock." But Naumann told her to leave the photos on his porch. He didn't get home until 2 a.m. Monday, and when she called later that morning, "he was tired but still assured me he wouldn't have any problem."

He got it done, and she was "very, very happy with the result," Bauer said. Told that Naumann also is a minister, she said, "I'm not surprised at all. He was so comforting."

Naumann began helping the bereaved as a pastor in 1972. In 1988, he didn't want to move his family, "so I decided to take a year off full-time ministry, take a breather and see what I could do to support my family." While working in family services at Hillside Cemetery in Minneapolis, he saw the possibilities for memorial videos.

When the video business took off, he left Hillside. Now business is so good he may have to hire someone part time to scan photos into a computer.

The memorial video often is used during visitations. (An abbreviated demonstration video is at [www.memoryvision.tv](http://www.memoryvision.tv).) Video records of funerals are a growing part of the business.

"With families scattered, sometimes overseas and not being able to attend, families see a need to videotape services," he said. "Now, with the Internet, it's possible to have streaming video access to these services." (Those are from tape, not live yet.)

Keeping the initial cost low and selling multiple copies are the keys to making a profit, Naumann said. He charges \$125 for a memorial video.

"My whole goal is to have the 'Wow' factor," he said, so that people will want copies. After the original, he charges \$25 each for orders of one to four; \$20 each for five, and \$15 each for 10 or more.

The standard package of 30 photos and two songs was de-

veloped from experience. He began by using fewer family photos interspersed with photos he took from nature. But he found that "people didn't care for my nature shots so much as they did for photos of the loved one. I tried going up to as many as 50 photos, but I found that

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— Scott Mueller,  
Mueller Memorial

was too much."

He has invested \$100,000 in equipment to put the pictures and music onto DVDs. He still can make tapes, but 95 percent of his business is DVDs.

People learn of his product through word of mouth, seeing memorial videos at visitations and through funeral directors who offer the service, some as part of their standard package.

One of those is Scott Mueller, whose company, Mueller Memorial, owns funeral homes in St. Paul and White Bear Lake. He began offering videos from other vendors in 1988, sometimes not getting the product on time.

"We met Alan through his being a minister," Mueller said. "Alan does a beautiful job," em-

phasizing matching music to the photos.

Choosing photos can be an emotional but valuable family event, Mueller said.

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Showing videos at visitations also tends to lift tension, Mueller said. "There are almost always lighthearted pictures in this video that bring laughter, and laughter changes the mood instantly."

Naumann keeps a master DVD and tape and organizes them for retrieval so copies can be made later.

Every visitation at which his video is shown "is an opportunity to showcase my video at work to 200 or 300 people," he said. Some people subsequently order a memorial video for someone who died years earlier, and others will call to hire him for some other kind of video work.

Naumann also sells an instructional video to meet growing interest in memorial and funeral videos. Although some funeral homes do their own, and some individuals are buying \$20 software to make their own, often "they discover it's a lot more work than they thought, or the quality isn't very good."

He doesn't see training others as cutting into his business, because "all we're doing right now is getting the tip of the iceberg." His way of staying ahead of competition is to market his work as a service that doesn't increase workload for funeral homes — he picks up the photos and delivers the DVDs — and by restoring photos before putting them on the videos, "which doesn't make sense from a business standpoint because of time, but it shows my attention to quality."

Another way of differentiating himself is by adding motion, sometimes called "the Ken Burns effect." By scanning across the photo or zooming in or out, people's attention is held longer.

Naumann also can include segments of home video. In one he did recently, "you actually see the mother dancing and trying on a dress. It's really, really powerful."